

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA NIACT IMMEDIATE
SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7390
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1106

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: THE POSSIBILITIES OF REALIGN-
MENTS AND US-UK STRATEGY

1. PROSPECTS FOR BREAKING THE PRESENT NEGOTIATING STALE MATE
ON RHODESIA DEPEND ESSENTIALLY UPON A MAJOR REALIGNMENT --
OR A CREDIBLE THREAT OF REALIGNMENT-- OF THE NATIONALIST
LEADERS. AS LONG AS THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND THE SALISBURY
GROUP EACH HOLD TOGETHER, THE SITUATION WOULD SEEM LIKELY TO
CONTINUE TO DEVELOP IN THE DIRECTION OF ESCALATED WARFARE.
ANY SIGNIFICANT REORDERING OF PRESENT POLITICAL ALLIANCES
WOULD OPEN UP POSSIBILITIES EITHER FOR A MORE PROMISING
INTERNAL SETTLEMENT OR FOR INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS.

2. AT THE MOMENT, THE SITUATION WITHIN ZIMBABWE NATIONALIST
RANKS, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL, IS FLUID IF STILL
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VISCOUS, OFFERING LIMITED WAYS IN WHICH WE MIGHT
PRUDENTLY SHAKE THE BOTTLE. ESSENTIALLY, ANY REALIGNMENT
MUST SPRING FROM THE POLITICAL, MILITARY AND PERSONALITY
DYNAMICS OF THE PARTIES. OUTSIDE EFFORTS AT MANIPULATION
COULD REBOUND AGAINST US. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE SOME ACTIONS
AND POSITIONS WHICH WE COULD TAKE AND ENCOURAGE OTHERS
TO ADOPT TO HELP LOOSEN UP THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT.

THE SITUATION IN BRIEF

3. THE SALISBURY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IS WOBBLY BUT STILL ON ITS FEET. SMITH'S RECENT STATEMENT THAT HE WOULD DROP OUT OF POLITICS AFTER THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT IS IMPLEMENTED (PRETORIA 3045), MAY BOOST ITS CREDIBILITY. INDICATIONS THAT THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MAY IN FACT ATTEMPT TO HOLD ELECTIONS ON A PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION BASIS ALSO SUGGESTS ADVANCEMENT. BUT THE SLAYING LAST MONTH OF MORE THAN 50 ZANU (SITHOLE) SUPPORTERS IN THE GUTU AREA (PRETORIA 2887) WAS A SERIOUS BLOW TO THE IMAGE AND UNITY OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. THE REPORTEDLY IMPRESSIVE TURNOUT FOR THE FIRST ZAPU RALLY SINCE ITS DEBANNING (PRETORIA 3090), IN CONTRAST TO THE EMBARRASSINGLY SMALL ATTENDANCE AT JOINT MEETINGS RECENTLY ADDRESSED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (SANS MUZOREWA), ALSO HAS NOT IMPROVED THE PRESTIGE OR MORALE OF THE SALISBURY GROUP.

4. MOREOVER, AS REPORTED IN CAPE TOWN 990, IT APPEARS THAT MUZOREWA'S POSITION IN THE UANC, AND PRESUBABLY IN THE COUNTRY AS WELL, HAS BEEN WEAKENED AS A RESULT OF THE HOVE AFFAIR. RUMORS ARE ABROAD THAT THE BISHOP IS EXPLORING CONTACTS WITH MUGABE, REPORTEDLY, SO FAR, WITHOUT SUCCESS.

5. SITHOLE, WHO IS KNOWN FOR INTRIGUE AND MANEUVERING, MAY ALSO BE LOOKING OVER HIS SHOULDER. IN LIGHT OF
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HIS RELATIVELY WEAK POLITICAL BASE, SITHOLE PROBABLY PERCEIVES ONLY TWO WAYS IN WHICH HE MIGHT HOPE TO SECURE FOR HIMSELF A MAJOR ROLE IN AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE:
(1) A TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE BY THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT GROUP WITHOUT BENEFIT OF ELECTIONS; OR (2) A RESTORATION OF HIS (SITHOLE'S) OLD ALLIANCE WITH NKOMO EITHER IN OR OUTSIDE THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT.

6. IN HIS RECENT TALKS WITH GARBA (LAGOS 6016) THE ABSENCE OF NKOMO'S PARTICIPATION APPEARED TO BE THE FOCUS OF SITHOLE'S PESSIMISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT'S PROSPECTS. WE WOULD GUESS THAT SITHOLE'S MAIN OBJECTIVE IN APPEARING TO BE "WON OVER" BY THE NIGERIANS AND MOST RECENTLY BY THE ZAMBIANS (LUSAKA 1910) IS TO ENCOURAGE THESE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE A NKOMO-SITHOLE RECONCILIATION. SITHOLE WOULD VERY LIKELY PREFER THAT NKOMO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT, IF NOT BY ACTUALLY JOINING THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL THEN PERHAPS BY TAKING PART IN THE ELECTIONS IN A POLITICAL ALLIANCE WITH SITHOLE. IF, HOWEVER, SITHOLE PERCEIVES THAT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE AND IF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT BEGINS TO CRUMBLE, HE MIGHT BE WILLING AT SOME POINT TO PULL

OUT AND JOIN NKOMO IN LUSAKA.

7. MEANWHILE, RELATIONS AMONG THE LEADERS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AND WITHIN ITS TWO CONSTITUENT PARTIES APPEAR TO BE AT LEAST AS STRAINED AS RELATIONS IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 1106
TDCOUR STRATEGY

8. PROBABLY OUR BEST APPROACH WILL BE TO CONTINUE TO DIRECT OUR EFFORTS PRIMARILY AT MUZOREWA AND HIS UANC. THE GRAHAM-LOW MISSION TO SALISBURY WILL KEEP THE AAP ALTERNATIVE IN FOCUS FOR THE UANC AND IT WILL ALSO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCREETLY UNDERSCORE TO THE BISHOP AND HIS AIDES THE DANGER HE HAS PUT HIMSELF IN, EVEN IF THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT SHOULD LEAD TO ELECTIONS AND HIS ADMINISTRATION OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE. AT THE SAME TIME, WE NEED TO FIND MORE CONVINCING WAYS THAN WE HAVE TO DATE TO REASSURE MUZOREWA REGARDING THE PROCESS ENVISIONED BY THE AAP. THE US AND UK MIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE, UNDERTAKE TO STATE AT THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT THAT THEY WOULD VIEW WITH GRAVE CONCERN EFFORTS BY ANY PARTY TO OVERTURN THE RESULTS OF A FREE ELECTION CONDUCTED BY AN IMPARTIAL ADMINISTRATION AND INTERNATIONALLY SUPERVISED.

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9. AT THE SAME TIME, WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THE FRONT LINE AND NIGERIA TO ASSURE MUZOREWA THAT IF HE WINS A FREE ELECTION UNDER INTERNATIONAL AUSPICES, THEY WOULD STRONGLY SUPPORT HIM. FOR THE AFRICACISTATES ONLY TO RECOGNIZE THE BISHOP'S "POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE" WILL NOT HAVE MUCH EFFECT. SOMETHING MUCH MORE DRAMATIC AND CONCRETE FROM NYERERE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WILL BE NECESSARY.

10. WE ALSO NEED TO IDENTIFY THOSE ELEMENTS IN THE UANC (MUZOREWA) WHO ARE MOST SKEPTICAL OF THE INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT AND THUS MORE RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA OF RECONSIDERING THE INTERNATIONAL OPTION.

11. GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTY INVOLVED AND THE DANGER OF A BACKLASH, WE SHOULD LEAVE THE GAMBIT OF PROMOTING A SITHOLE-NKOMO COALITION TO THE NIGERIANS AND ZAMBIANS. THE BRITISH MAY ALSO STILL BE DABBLING IN THIS GAME. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS HERE, DATELINED LONDON, TINY ROWLANDS SAT IN ON SITHOLE'S TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH OWEN ON MAY 26. HOW TO BRING NKOMO INTO THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT, THE REPORTS SAID, WAS A MAJOR POINT OF THE DISCUSSION. WHILE CATEGORICALLY REJECTING ANY SUCH SCHEME PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY, NKOMO REPORTEDLY CONTINUES TO HOLD OCCASIONAL SO FAR NON-PRODUCTIVE SECRET MEETINGS WITH RHODESIAN INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS.

12. THERE IS EVERY REASON FOR CONTINUED SKEPTICISM THAT NKOMO AT THIS POINT WOULD CONSIDER JOINING THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT UNLESS SOMEHOW GUARANTEED LEADERSHIP OF THE FUTURE ZIMBABWE. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE MIGHT VERY LIKELY WELCOME SITHOLE IF THE LATTER WISHES TO JOIN UP WITH ZAPU IN LUSAKA.

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13. THIS MURKY SITUATION SUGGESTS THAT OUR CONTRIBUTION TO A SITHOLE-NKOMO REASSESSMENT SHOULD BE LIMITED TO CONTINUING TO FOLLOW OUR POLICY OF:

--A SKEPTICAL, HANDS-OFF POSTURE TOWARDS THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT,

--A VISIBLE EFFORT TO SHOW CONTINUED LIFE IN THE AAP, AND

--AVOIDANCE OF A CONCLUSIVE AGREEMENT ON THE AAP WITH THE PF ALONE.
EDMONDSON

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